

Budget

Lawmakers worked tirelessly to address our serious budget deficit. I respect the efforts of our budget negotiators but could not in good conscience vote for the final budget.

K-12 education was cut nearly \$600 million! The voter-approved initiatives (I-728 and I-732) that promised better salaries for *all* educators and more funding for “Better Schools” were not honored. In health care, 25,000 fewer people will be served by the Basic Health Plan, changes in the Medically Indigent programs threaten our hospitals, and an estimated 20,000 children will lose health insurance. We need a state budget that gives people better value for their tax dollars without compromising our values on education and health care. This budget fell short.

New laws I sponsored

One of my most important jobs is to sponsor legislation. I’ve learned that by putting partisan rhetoric aside and working closely with people from all political perspectives, we can get good ideas for laws enacted. Here are several measures I sponsored that became law this year:

State efficiency in health care. To ensure better value for tax dollars, we enacted a law to coordinate all state agency health care purchases under new guidelines that require cost-effective purchasing and more efficient administration.

Medicaid personal care. To give nurses more time to focus on patient needs, I sponsored a law to reduce the Medicaid paperwork burden on nurses. It passed unanimously.

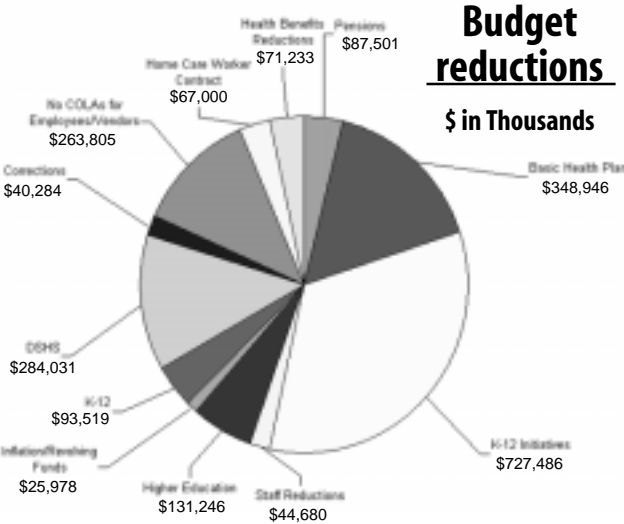
Boarding home inspection. This law saves the state money and improves patient safety in boarding homes by increasing unannounced inspections of boarding homes with histories of problems. This allows staff more time to investigate complaints by reducing inspections in well-managed homes.

Reducing mercury. Mercury contamination is poisoning our state waters and threatening public health – particularly the health of pregnant women and infants. I helped lead efforts to ban some mercury uses and require warning labels for consumers. By emphasizing common-sense compromise, we secured strong bipartisan and business support for this new law.

Drunken drivers beware. A new law I sponsored adds 60 days of mandatory ignition interlock use for anyone convicted of drunken driving while carrying a passenger under age 16.

Voluntary organ and tissue donor registry. We created a voluntary statewide organ and tissue donor registry, funded by financial donations. I sponsored the House version of the Senate law that passed. Organ donation saves lives!

For a full list of all my sponsored bills, go to <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov> or contact my office.



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Representative Dawn Morrell

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



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State Rep. Dawn Morrell

Dear Neighbors,

My first seven months as your state representative have been an incredible honor. The session was a difficult one – we needed to bridge a \$2.7 billion budget deficit and that meant we had to work hard and fight hard to protect our values and quality of life.

Despite the challenges, however, we were able to move forward on many important issues. One example is our new prescription drug bill which will provide much-needed assistance to low-income seniors and people with disabilities. The Legislature also overwhelmingly approved my public works bill which will create more than 5,000 jobs throughout our state by increasing investments in community revitalization.

The phone numbers and addresses on this page give you several quick and easy ways to contact me. I sincerely appreciate all those who wrote or called during session to share their thoughts with me. My office doors are always open and I welcome you to get in touch at any time!

Please take a few moments to look inside and tell me what you think. I'll look forward to hearing from you!

Dawn Morrell

Dawn Morrell
State Representative, 25th District

Representative Dawn Morrell

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Health Care

I feel honored that my commitment to health care issues and experience as a critical care nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital led to my appointment as Vice-Chair of the House Health Care Committee. This role allows me to work in-depth on issues I care most passionately about.



Rx reform

I am very proud of the historic prescription drug reforms we enacted. As a nurse, I've watched too many people risk their health by cutting pills in half or skipping pills because their medicines cost too much. These reforms were needed now.



Medical experts will be called on to create a list of the most effective medicines. This list will guide bulk purchasing by state agencies, and pharmacists will be encouraged (but not required) to use the list when filling prescriptions. Doctors, who know their patients best, will still be able to prescribe medicine not on the list with a "dispense as written" provision. Taxpayers will save millions through these bulk purchasing discounts!

These price discounts will be available to 590,000 seniors and people with disabilities who don't have prescription drug insurance. Eventually, I hope we can open this program to everyone in the state.

Many thanks to the AARP and Senior Lobby for working so hard on these reforms!

Home care workers

If your parents or loved ones need 24/7 personal care, would you rather place them in a nursing home or have them cared for in their own home? I'm sure we'd all agree that in-home care is our first choice. However, we face a crisis in home care because not enough qualified care givers are willing to be on call seven days a week and do back-breaking work for a mere \$7.68/hour without benefits.

I proudly sponsored the bill to implement the voter-approved initiative that called for better salaries and benefits for home care workers (I-775). The state Health Care Authority negotiated a good-faith agreement to raise home care giver salaries to \$9.75 an hour and provide basic health care benefits.

Unfortunately, due to the budget deficit, the Legislature only approved a 75-cent raise and no benefits. This won't solve our crisis. Taxpayers will continue to pay much higher costs for nursing home care if we don't do better next year.



Building for our future

My main goal as a member of the Capital Budget Committee (the committee that oversees state construction investments) was to take advantage of record-low interest rates to create jobs and build schools, college classrooms and local infrastructure at bargain prices.



With near unanimous support, we passed a statewide construction plan that is great for our schools and colleges.

Good for schools and taxpayers. The new construction investments reverse a long-term trend that has unfairly shifted much of the state's share of school construction costs to local property taxes. The plan will not only help build modern classrooms our students need, *it reduces the local property-tax share of building a typical high school by nearly \$1.2 million.*

Good for colleges. Low interest rates made this an ideal year to launch a six-year, \$750-million construction and repair plan for colleges and universities. Without this investment, our colleges would have no space for tens of thousands of future high school graduates.

Good for the elderly. Low interest rates also made it possible for us to invest \$80 million – the most in state history – in affordable housing for seniors, the disabled and low-income families.

Great for the economy. The new construction budget will create an estimated 24,000 jobs during the next four years and help jump-start our local economies.



Please join me in supporting our troops and their families.

Key Local Investments In the new Capital Budget



Pierce College Puyallup – A new student center, classroom space and laboratories to expand high-tech programs, plus design work for a future Communication Arts & Allied Health Building that will emphasize training for good-paying health care and high tech jobs.

City of Puyallup – Acquisition of a popular fishing site along the Puyallup River.

South Hill Park – Funds for final completion of the park.

North County Regional Soccer Park – Development of the new park in Fife is now off to a good start.

City of Milton – State matching funds for the Interurban Trailhead.

Sprinker Recreation Center – Funds for a family activity area and skate park.

Transportation

As you know, transportation was one of the session's hot-test topics. I enthusiastically supported the efficiency and accountability reforms we passed to reduce project costs and require ongoing performance audits. I do think, however, that we can do better. As many local people reminded me, the public had voted against higher gas taxes just a few months before the session began. I think rebuilding trust among our citizens is vital.



On the plus side, the 10-year transportation package is a solid one that addresses several local traffic choke points along Meridian, SR 7, SR 16 and SR 410. Like you, I'll be watching to make sure Pierce County residents will be getting their money's worth.

Senior property-tax relief



One of the first things I did in Olympia was propose additional property-tax relief for our senior citizens. Today, 13,000 fewer retirees qualify for senior and disabled property-tax relief than were helped in 1997. We need to do better.

I proposed: (1) expanding property tax relief to seniors making up to \$35,000 – an increase of \$5,000; and (2) allowing all seniors to deduct health insurance costs and veterans' disability payments when calculating eligibility for tax relief. These reforms are fair and would make more than 55,000 additional seniors eligible for property-tax relief. I'll continue working on property-tax relief until we prevail.

State Representative
Dawn Morrell

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